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FOUR TYPES OF CHRISTIAN THOUGHT.

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II. THE PAULINE EPISTLES.

The religious history of Paul.—The influence of his rabbinical training,—and of his conversion.—How he arrived at his conception of the vicarious significance of Christ's death.—“Righteousness of God” and the work of Christ.—Faith.—The Fatherhood of God—as compared with the view of Jesus—as a reality.—Other Pauline doctrines:—sin, atonement, Holy Spirit, Christology.

It goes without saying that a man with Paul's very remarkable religious history, not to speak of his not less remarkable natural endowments, would have his own way of thinking concerning the Christian faith. Individuality in conception is a natural sequel of individuality in experience. The former is a reflection of the latter and is best understood in the light of it.

The religious history of Paul, in its main outlines, is well known from certain of the letters ascribed to him contained in the New Testament collection of writings. Which of all these letters, if not all, are certainly genuine, need not be here discussed. Suffice it to say that the most important for biographical and doctrinal purposes alike, are also the most surely authentic, those, viz., to the Galatian, Corinthian and Roman churches. These four epistles are in an emphatic sense the literature of *Paulinism*.

From these letters we learn that Saul of Tarsus had such a religious history as made it (1) wonderful that he ever became a Christian and (2) that if he did become a Christian he would be a very extraordinary one both in the sphere of thought and in the sphere of conduct. The simple facts are these: He got his early education in Rabbinical schools. He was initiated into the rigor of Pharisaic piety. He was an apt pupil both in Rabbinic theory and in Pharisaic practice, an enthusiast, a zealot,

ambitious to excel as a virtuoso in legal righteousness and easily successful in his ambition. Hostility to the new religion, as soon as it crossed his path, was a matter of course for such a man. He will oppose the disciples of Jesus the crucified as resolutely and relentlessly as the previous generation of Pharisees had opposed their Master.

A persecutor by the traditions of his class, by personal conviction, and by policy, the wonder is that he ceased to be such and became a believer and a preacher of the faith which he once destroyed. Saul's conversion is one of the most surprising events in the history of primitive Christianity, presenting for study a most interesting psychological and apologetic problem. Here we accept it simply as a fact and concern ourselves not with its causes but with its significance and consequences. For such an one as Saul, the man of keen intellect, of intense moral earnestness, of resolute will and devoted temper, and to crown all, the ex-Pharisee, to become a Christian, means much. "All things are become new" is his own strong characterization of the change. "All things," well, at least many things, and these the most vital. Apparent to every one is the change from persecutor to preacher, from gainsayer to believer. But beneath the surface is a more radical change, an altered view of God and his relation to man and of the nature and conditions of salvation. The Rabbinical God was simply a legislator to whom men stood in the relation of subjects, the relation between God and man being purely legal, God saying: Do this or do that, man trying hard to comply with the behest, in fear of the divine frown if he failed, in hope of the divine favor if he succeeded. Such was the God of Saul the Pharisee, and such his habitual attitude towards him. For Paul the Christian all that is changed. God the legislator exacting conformity to his law has become God the gracious giver; man the slaving toiler in obedience has become the humble, grateful receiver. This alteration in the conception of God and man and their relations is the fundamental element in the change. Paul's Christian theology is simply an elaborate attempt to formulate the new position and its implications.

All things new, in the main point, and in the deepest sense.

But it will not surprise us to find the new Christian man, so far as religious attitude is concerned, still in some respects the old pupil of the Rabbis, in his attempts at formulating and defending his new position, especially if these attempts are made in connection with a controversy against men who do not accept in its integrity the Christian principle of salvation by grace. Controversy is a very binding thing. It compels you to argue on common ground, to use arguments that carry weight with opponents, and to employ current and familiar phraseology. Now all Paul's leading epistles, especially the four above named, were written under the pressure of a controversy with a party in the church who, while nominally Christian, had never broken with Judaistic legalism. Hence a perceptible mixture of old and new; the use of categories borrowed from Pharisaic theology to express Christian conceptions, the employment of Rabbinical methods of interpreting scripture to establish anti-Rabbinical positions. These relics of the pre-Christian period would have supplied no legitimate occasion for either surprise or offense even had there been no controversy to explain and excuse them. Even in the most radical moral changes we must expect some features to remain which keep up the continuity of character. Not only should we expect such, we might almost desire them. They serve as interesting notes of individuality; they help to connect a man with his time; and, more important function, they are a foil to show the greatness of the change which has taken place in more vital matters. Paul's religious intuitions are Christian, his arguments and interpretations are sometimes Rabbinical; if for us they have not always much value either as argument or as interpretation, they help us at least to gauge the magnitude of the revolution which made a man so firmly held in the grasp of old usage in secondary matters so utterly different from his former self in his inmost spirit.

Though the Pauline epistles were called forth by controversy many years after the writer's conversion to Christianity, we are not to suppose that the articulations of faith therein contained then for the first time occurred to his mind. It would be at once an intellectual and a religious necessity for Paul as soon as

he became a believer in Jesus to master by reflection the significance of his new faith, and it may be assumed that the process was well nigh completed during the period of three years spent in the Arabian desert (Gal. 1:17). What would one not give for an autobiographical account of Paul's mental history during that eventful time! Yet it is not impossible imaginatively to reconstruct it in broad outline. Paul's conversion meant two things at least; a final conviction that along the line of legal righteousness, salvation, in the sense of peace of conscience or peace with God, was not attainable; and a firm belief that the Jesus who appeared to him on the way to Damascus was the Christ. The former of these positions he had reached before the eventful days of his conversion, through the despair-inspiring perception that sin did not consist only in outward acts, but especially in states of feeling, such as coveting. This discovery prepared him for receiving the other truth, and doubtless helped to precipitate the final crisis. Here, then, is Saul the convert furnished with two items of his Christian creed; Salvation by legal righteousness impossible; Jesus the Christ. Both items raise further questions. If legal righteousness be not the true way to salvation, what then is the way? If Jesus be the Christ, why did he suffer on the cross? At first the two problems might present themselves as distinct, but ere long they probably merged into one. The two questions were both very urgent, and we may conceive the young convert attacking now the one and now the other, with a presentiment that an answer to either would turn out to be at the same time an answer to the other. Let us suppose him occupied with the latter of the two. Jesus the Christ, yet a crucified man; an antinomy urgently demanding resolution. For Saul the Pharisee this had appeared an impossible combination. Jesus then seemed to him not the Christ but a pretender to Messiahship, justly suffering for his false, blasphemous pretensions. But now that the Christhood can no longer be disputed what account is to be given of his sufferings, which as a matter of history, are beyond all doubt? Of course, it can no longer be thought that the crucified one suffered for his own sin. Paul sees only one alternative. He must

have suffered for the sins of others. Another possible view, superficially if not radically distinct was: He suffered like the prophets for righteousness' sake. That was the first lesson Jesus himself taught the disciples concerning the meaning of his death. That aspect of the matter did not suggest itself to Paul's mind, or if it did he was not able to find intellectual, still less, moral rest in it. This, because first it was an axiom with him that all suffering is on account of sin, either one's own or that of another. One's own presumably in the first place, but the other alternative could not appear inconceivable to one familiar with the words, "The Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all." Another reason why Paul's mind settled down at once on the vicarious significance of Christ's death was the following: It offered a ready solution of the other problem; if salvation is not by legal righteousness how then? Pressed hard by this imperious question the convert's mind grasped the great thought: *Jesus by death made a sinner for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*

"The righteousness of God"—this is one of the outstanding phrases of Paulinism; it is indeed the key-word of the Pauline theology. It is peculiar to Paul; it is nowhere in the New Testament used in the same sense; it expresses a very peculiar idea, startling, original and daring, by no means one that readily occurs to the mind in connection with the words, a fact virtually acknowledged by Paul by the omission of the article before *δικαιοσύνη* (Rom. 1:17; 3:22) giving us not "the righteousness of God," but "a righteousness of God," as if it were something which stood very much in need of definition. So it does, for the phrase does not mean, as we might naturally expect God's personal righteousness, nor even the righteousness which God requires of us, but the righteousness which God gives, or rather it means both the two latter things together. In this coinage of the great apostle extremes meet; legalism and antilegalism; legalism in so far as it implies that God, as the Judaists contended demanded righteousness from all, antilegalism in so far as it implies that the righteousness which God demands he at the same time bestows. What then is this righteousness which God

bestows? It consists in counting us for, treating us as righteous when we are not. Practically it is equivalent to *pardon*. This is clearly implied in the passage, Romans 4:6-8, "Even as David describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." The man to whom God gives righteousness, whom he "justifies," is a man whose sins he freely forgiveth.

But this divine gift of righteousness, or of pardon, the apostle ever connects with the death of Christ as its procuring cause. So in the text from 2 Corinthians already referred to: "He hath made him to be sin for us" (2 Cor. 5:21); so also in Romans 3:24, "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Whether the apostle could or would have used the expression, "the righteousness of God," as a synonym for pardon without conscious reference to Christ's death cannot be determined; the fact is that in his letters the two things are always associated so closely as to suggest that he conceived of the righteousness which God bestows as the righteousness of the crucified Redeemer set to the credit of those who believe in him. Such, as is well known, is the interpretation put on his teaching in the Westminster standards. In the Shorter Catechism justification is defined as an act of God's free grace "wherein he pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as righteous, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us and received by faith alone." Yet Paul himself nowhere identifies the righteousness of God with the righteousness of Christ, or speaks of the latter as imputed. He always speaks of the imputation of *faith*, never of the imputation of Christ's righteousness. "To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his *faith* is counted for righteousness" (Rom. 4:5).

Of course, faith is a great word in the Pauline theology. It could not fail to be, in a system whose fundamental axiom was that salvation is by *grace*, and which waged uncompromising war with the notion that a man could commend himself to God by

legal righteousness. "Faith alone" is Paul's watchword; faith *versus* works. Faith in his view is good for everything, good to begin with, good to end with; good for justification, good for sanctification; good for bringing initial peace to the troubled conscience, good for establishing the permanent stable peace of a spiritual mind. He is prepared to fight it out on that line, against Judaists, and against still more formidable foes—the devil, the world, and the flesh. For faith, as he conceives it, is no mere hand to grasp a benefit, imputed righteousness, as protestant scholastics represent it; it is a powerful, energetic principle, working towards personal sanctity by the purest and highest of all motives—love. *Πίστις δὲ ἀγάπης ἐνεργουμένη* (Gal. 5:5).

Note here the essential agreement, amid superficial differences, between Paul and the Lord Jesus. In his fundamental axiom that salvation is of grace, or that the true relation between God and man is not definable in terms of law, and in his lofty conception of the function and power of faith, as at once the humble recipient of divine benefits and the root principle of a Godlike life, the apostle is the true disciple of the great Master. His theology is in several respects his own, but his deep religious intuitions are identical with those which lend an undying charm to the "Galilean Gospel."

These remarks naturally introduce the question: Does Paul follow the Lord Jesus in his way of speaking concerning God? Is the Fatherhood prominent in his pages? The answer must be a qualified one. The Fatherhood is there but not so prominently, and even when it does occur it is presented in a different, less spontaneous, more artificial aspect. It is noticeable that the name Father is applied to God more frequently in the gospels than in any other part of the New Testament, the Pauline epistles not excepted. It seems as if this name for God had not quite secured for itself a dominant place in the Christian consciousness of the apostolic church. The fact may be used as a voucher for the historic fidelity of the evangelists in their presentation of the teaching of Jesus. They make the Master speak a language which never gained full currency, manifestly in obedience not to present fashion but to past fact. But Paul was too

well acquainted with the mind, too much in sympathy with the spirit of Jesus, not to know, value, and frequently use his favorite name for the divine being. Yet in his use we mark a difference. God appears as the father of *adopted* sons. The privilege of those who believe in Christ is to receive adoption (*υιοθεσίαν*), to be constituted sons. The sonship of man as man seems to be ignored, and the sonship even of Christians seems to be something artificial, incomplete, unreal; for an adopted son can never be the same as a son begotten and born. One would say the pupil of the rabbis speaks here, the ex-legalist, still legal in his phraseology, if anti-legal and evangelic in his meaning. The latter he certainly is, for he sets the privilege of adoption in antithesis to the bondage under the law. "To redeem them that were under the law that we might receive the adoption of sons." And I make bold to say that in his doctrine of sonship Paul is more evangelic, more Christian, than his terminology might seem to suggest. For, observe, in what we may call the classic passage bearing on the subject, Galatians 4: 1-7, being constituted sons (*υιοθεσία*) is predicated of those who have been sons all along, but, as minors, have differed nothing from slaves, but been under guardians of their persons, and stewards of their estate. Therefore the so-called "adoption" really means "making sons indeed, to the full extent of realizing all that sonship implies in the way of privilege, of those who were sons before in name and standing, but not in spirit and in consciously enjoyed privilege." The sons in name are a large category, embracing Jews before the Christian era, pagans, prodigal, all men, irrespective of race, character or religion.

Paul's doctrine of the fatherhood and of sonship is nearer Christ's than it at first seemed. This becomes increasingly apparent as we make ourselves acquainted with his splendid appreciation of the spirit and privilege of sonship. Sonship as he describes it is no empty name but a grand spiritual reality, a state of freedom from the law, which is graphically depicted now as a jailer, now as a pedagogue, now as a system of tutors and governors, now as a stern, cruel husband, from all which the son of God by faith in Jesus Christ is happily delivered. The spirit of

sonship as it appears in his pages, is a spirit of trust, as opposed to legal fear, able to look up to heaven and call God father; a spirit of gladness and irrepressible buoyancy, rejoicing in glorious future prospects, in present tribulations, and in God above all; a spirit of hope, optimistic in mood, and resolutely believing that all things worked together for good; a spirit of lordship over the world, defiant of hostile powers, and serving itself heir to all things that have any capacity in them for promoting good ends. In short, read Romans 8, if you want to know what a grand thing sonship is in the apostle's mind.

The righteousness of God, justification by faith, adoption—these three words embody the central conceptions of St. Paul concerning the way and nature of salvation. But Paulinism is a large subject and there are other weighty topics falling to be considered in any adequate handling of the theme. Among these, of the first order of importance are *the doctrine of sin*, *the theory of atonement*, *the Holy Spirit* and *the Person of Christ*. A few rapid hints on these great matters are all that can be offered here.

All that Paul says on the subject of *sin* is subordinate to his fundamental thesis that salvation by the method of legal righteousness is impossible. His doctrine of sin is just his negative doctrine of justification. With this in view he makes four affirmations: (1) Sin is generally prevalent, among Jews and Gentiles alike, often in aggravated forms (Rom. 1 and 2). (2) Sin is universally prevalent, reigning over all without exception, for death reigneth over all, and where death is, sin must be (Rom. 5:12-19). (3) Sin not only reigneth *over* man as a malign death-bringing power, but *in* him making him a slave to evil, through the medium of the *flesh* (Rom. 7:18-20). (4) Because of the flesh with its evil bias, even the God-given holy law is impotent to make a man good; it rather acts as an irritant to transgression (Rom. 7:7-13). Under all these heads the apostle's treatment of his subject is characteristically bold and original. Under the first by the terribly realistic description of the actual sin of the world; under the second by the asserted connection between the sin of Adam and the universal prevalence of sin and

death; under the third by a view of the flesh which seems to border on Manichæism; under the fourth by a conception of the function of the law which seems at once paradoxical, and contrary to the teaching of Old Testament scripture. The second, third, and fourth items are among the most knotty and disputed points of the Pauline system of thought. Happily the doctrines taught on these topics, however important in their own place, are not vital to faith. They are remarkable theologoumena of a subtle, earnest thinker who shrank from no problem however difficult. Nothing similar is to be found in the teaching of Jesus. No recorded word of his touches on the connection between the first man and the rest of the human race, or even so much as suggests, not to say teaches, that the flesh is inherently and incurably sinful, or hints that the law was, and was meant to be, a hindrance rather than a help to holiness.

Paul's theory of atonement is a large theme, but it may be outlined in a few sentences. It may be described generally as a theory of redemption by the *self-humiliation* of the Redeemer. The Redeemer in love stoops down into the position of those whom he would redeem and the divinely appointed reward of this meritorious act is that men *ipso facto* enter into the state of privilege which properly belongs to him. The Redeemer humbles himself thoroughly, entering into the unblessed condition of his clients in all its aspects; coming under the law, its curse, God's wrath, death, therefore sin, and the temptations arising from the flesh, because men are under these, and so delivering us from them all. Each act in the drama of self-humiliation possesses its own emancipating virtue. Coming under law (*e. g.*, by being circumcised), Jesus delivers from bondage to the law, and so on with all the other categories. The redemption is *objectively* complete at once. The law's dominion was at an end for humanity as soon as the Son of God condescended to come under it. "'Tis finished, legal worship ends, And gospel ages run." But objective redemption simply means the view which God for Christ's sake is graciously pleased to take of the world. The objective state of privilege must be subjectively realized in order that the redemption may be complete. How is the subjective

realization achieved? The answer to the question is one of the most characteristic features of Paulinism. The power lies in what Pfleiderer has called Paul's faith-mysticism. The apostle was not content to teach an objective identity between Christ and mankind in virtue of which he became, in God's sight, our vicar, representative or substitute, dying in our stead. He asserts in every possible form of expression a subjective identity, in virtue of which all that happened to the Redeemer repeats itself in our experience. Does he die? we die with him; is he buried? we are buried along with him; does he rise again? we rise also; does he ascend into heaven? we too make for the upper regions.

Closely connected with this doctrine of the mystic power of faith to make the believer die, rise and ascend with Christ is the Pauline doctrine of the *Holy Spirit*. The Holy Spirit in Paul's system of thought goes along with faith as a guarantee for *Christian holiness*. Faith he conceived as a mighty moral force working through love towards sanctity. The Holy Spirit he similarly conceived as a divine power immanent in us, making steadily towards the same goal. Now this view of the Holy Spirit as the immanent source of Christian holiness, a common-place of theology now, is one of the originalities of Paulinism. The conception of the Holy Spirit and his work in the primitive church was different. They thought of him chiefly as the source of spiritual gifts of a miraculous nature, such as speaking with tongues, of *χαρίσματα* rather than *χάρις*; and of the manner of his action as occasional, intermittent, transcendent. Paul's great contribution was to conceive of the Spirit's work as *ethical* rather than as charismatic, immanent rather than transcendent, constant rather than intermittent. The fruit of the Spirit, thought primitive disciples, is speaking with tongues, prophesying, healing disease. The fruit of the Spirit, said the great apostle, is "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." Men of all modern theological schools recognize the epoch-making significance of the saying.

It was a matter of course that a man entertaining Paul's conception of salvation should have a lofty idea of the person of

Christ. It is in his soteriology that we must seek the roots of his Christology. The function of redemption performed by Christ secured for him in Paul's grateful heart the place of Lord, object of devoted love and even of worship. Out of a full heart he calls him "our Lord Jesus Christ" when he thinks of him as the source of "peace with God." This peace Paul believed to have been secured by the death of Jesus. That belief involved belief in the Saviour's sinlessness. Had he been a sinner he would have died for his own sin. Dying for the sin of others he must have known no sin. In the resurrection of the Redeemer Paul saw the guarantee of his sinlessness. It proved that he suffered for *our* offenses, not his own; therefore he rose again for our justification (Rom. 4:25). On these two foundations the sinlessness of Jesus and his resurrection Paul's doctrine of Christ's person was mainly founded. Hence the explicit reference to them in the opening sentences of the Epistle to the Romans, where the apostle takes occasion to define his Christological position. He there names Jesus "God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord," and represents him as declared to be (or constituted) the Son of God with power according to the *spirit of holiness* by the *resurrection from the dead*. That is, this august person, a descendant of *David* on the side of his flesh, is made and shown to be, in a signal manner *God's Son*, on the spiritual side of his being, by the holiness of his life, and, by way of climax, by the resurrection.

Christ's own favorite self-designation, Son of Man, we miss in St. Paul's pages. The apostle had a firm grasp of the *humiliation* of Jesus in his earthly life, but he did not employ that title to express the fact that he who was intrinsically rich, for our sakes became poor. In place of this lowly name we find another which sets forth Christ's humanity in its ideal significance, the last Adam, the second man from heaven. This was a name which would naturally commend itself to one who was an enthusiastic advocate of Christian universalism, of a gospel for the world, not merely for the Jews. Paul's mind found in these designations, the last Adam, the man from heaven, the fitting expression for the fact that Jesus, like the first man, stood

as Redeemer, in a representative relation to the whole human race.

"Son of God." Did Paul use this designation strictly as implying divinity, or in a more general sense, as denoting ethical affinity in a preëminent but not exclusive sense? It is certain that in some texts he represents Christ's sonship as something he has in common with believers, as in the well-known passage, Romans 8:29, "Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son that he might be the first-born among many brethren." Yet even in the same chapter from which these words are taken, phrases occur which seem to point to a unique relation, *e. g.*, "His own Son" (v. 3, τὸν ἑαυτοῦ υἱόν, v. 32, τοῦ ἰδίου υἱοῦ). And there are other texts in the Pauline epistles where Christ seems to have a place assigned to him within the divine sphere, *e. g.*, 1 Thess., 1:10, where Jesus is called God's Son in a connection of thought in which Paul describes the faith of the Thessalonians as a turning from idols to serve the living and true God. After so characterizing the objects of heathen worship the apostle would doubtless feel it needful to be careful how he expressed himself concerning the object of the Christian faith. And yet he has no hesitation in calling Jesus God's Son. Still more significant is the manner in which he characterizes Jesus in 1 Cor., 8, again in a context containing an antithesis between heathenism and Christian theism. "If," he says, referring to Pagan ideas, "there be gods so called (λεγόμενοι θεοὶ) whether in heaven, or upon earth, as indeed there are gods many and lords many, for us there is one God the Father from whom are all things and we for him, and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we through him." This may be taken to be as careful a statement as the apostle knows how to make. The epithet Father applied to God implies the epithet Son, applicable to Jesus Christ, and though the emphatic εἷς prefixed to θεός (one God) may seem to exclude Christ the Son from the divine sphere and make his lordship, however lofty, something below deity, yet the functions assigned to him as one by or for whom all things, and we through him, seem to run par-

allel to those assigned to God the Father and to exalt him to the level of Godhead.

Whether the apostle ever expressly called Jesus God, depends on the interpretation put on the words in Romans 9:5, *ὁ ὢν ἐπὶ πάντων θεὸς εὐλογητὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας* rendered in the authorized version, "Who is over all God blessed forever." It might be taken as a doxology—may the God who is over all be blessed forever; in which case the words would not refer to Christ. The history of opinion on this question, on which scholars are much divided, cannot be gone into here.